

Homeownership was just the beginning

Dani Day and her family continue to strive for greatness

By Erin Gasch

I thought that once I owned my own house I'd be perfectly content, that I'd have achieved something," says Habitat homeowner Dani Day. "But once I got settled in my home, I realized that there was a lot more I wanted to do."

Dani's Habitat experience illustrates how becoming a Habitat homeowner, while an accomplishment in and of itself, usually leads Habitat families to keep achieving continuing to make their lives even better.

Dani Day found Habitat in 1993 through the manager of the subsidized housing complex where she was living. Dani was accepted to the Habitat program and started putting in her sweat equity hours on her home, the first HFHMD Women's Build home. Dani completed her 500 required hours of sweat equity—and then proceeded to contribute 1,000 more. "I know my house inside and out," she says. "I've always been a physical person and enjoy working hard, but I love that I know all the little details of my house."

Dani used to be afraid of all those little details. "Before I got my house, I would always quit when things got hard. I always wanted to continue my education, but I never thought I'd have the money. Once I realized that I could afford to own a home, I realized that I could also afford to go to school—there had to be a way." Dani started taking college courses and found the support of her new found Habitat friends to be a big help. "Whenever I hit a wall and felt like I couldn't continue to go to school, the folks at Habitat helped me think positively. They made me realize that there were lots of resources out there for me. I finally had the support system I needed to do something I'd always dreamed of."

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Dani also has big dreams for her three children, Adam, age 16, Samantha, age 12, and James, age 10. I know the things I've accomplished will inspire my children to accomplish great things, too. They've watched the kids in the neighborhood [from other Habitat families] to on to college." Young James aspires to be an architect, something Dani sees as a direct result of their family's connection to Habitat. "James is always looking at the photos of himself out at the build site when he was a baby."

Dani's children have developed strong friendships as a result of the secure neighborhood where they now live. James recently told his mom's

fiancé, "You know, I've known my best friend my whole life." Dani says most of the families in the subsidized apartment complex where they previously lived were transient and that if Dani and her children had stayed there, James might not have developed these great friendships.

Friendships, fellowship and the skills Dani learned from her Habitat experience have made her passionate about continuing to give back to the community. Dani, who is currently the director of equipment and supplies for the KUSA Channel 9 Health Fair, enjoys her full-time job with a community program. The volunteers at the health fair remind her of her volunteer friends at Habitat. Dani hopes to one day start a nonprofit organization of her own.

Habitat for Humanity, as it has for so many families, has done more than just provide Dani and her family with a place to live. It has inspired them to keep dreaming, keep growing and continue to achieve their goals. Dani's story is the essence of how Habitat for Humanity builds families as well as homes.